

A SELECTION OF ONLINE RESOURCES TO FOSTER INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The act of teaching a foreign language implies the inclusion of cultural aspects in the curriculum to boost students learning through closer realistic experiences. Integrating culture into the EFL classroom helps learners both to learn about the target language and the target culture. At the same time, it is an opportunity for learners to learn and reflect about their one culture. Preparing learners for the intercultural exchange can be achieved towards the incorporation of Intercultural Communicative Competence into the classroom. For that reason, the purpose of this project is to present a website of online resources based on cultural aspects of American culture to assist intercultural teaching and learning processes. The different resources presented in the webpage are useful tools support for teachers to develop listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. Additionally to help teachers to incorporate culture into the EFL classroom, the material hosted in the webpage represents a solid opportunity for teachers to design classes with authentic material representative of American culture.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved husband whose love and constant support have enriched my life and encouraged me to pursue each one of my dreams. Finally, I dedicate my thesis to my parents who have always been there for me.

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I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Michelle Plaisance, for sharing her knowledge with me and for the guidance and great support she has given me throughout my thesis design.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Currently, the field of education has been reinforced with the implementation of technology in the design of curricula, specifically, with the use of online resources as a strategy to facilitate and complement the processes of both teaching and learning of a foreign/second language. During my school years working in the public schools in Colombia, I had the opportunity to work in different contexts and I could learn and identify some of the needs of teachers and students in academic contexts. One of my main concerns was that, since most of the classes emphasize teaching grammar, drills, and memorization, some of the students show a lack of motivation to learn English or they do not see the importance of learning a foreign language. On the other hand, teachers have not been exposed to enough resources and tools to implement during their classes to make those experiences more interactive and attractive to students. Furthermore, there is a lack of interaction with the target culture. English is a mandatory class in public schools; students are supposed to get involved in English classes from elementary to high school. However, students and teachers do not have enough opportunities to interact with native speaker or to participate in cultural exchange with the speakers from cultures in which English is spoken or is the official language.

In Colombia, there are some programs, which allow teachers to have cultural exchanges in USA for some weeks. Students from high school can also participate in summer camps, but unfortunately, only few of them, especially if they have a high proficiency in the target language and/or the economic possibilities, can get access to this kind of programs. Neither teachers nor

students develop high communicative skills in the foreign language that allow them to acquire an appropriate and accurate communicative competence in the target language.

During the last two years, I have had the opportunity to participate in a cultural exchange teaching in a public school in the USA. This enriching experience has given me the opportunity to learn and discover new strategies, methodologies and resources that have allowed me to grow, not only personally but also professionally. After these two years of cultural exchange, I have realized the importance of knowing about the target culture through the interaction with native speakers. This opportunity has helped me to improve not only the language, but also the capacity of understanding aspects of the target culture and reflecting about my own one. As a Spanish teacher in the USA, I have also noticed how essential it is for students to have the opportunity to interact with native speakers of the target language. This interaction with native speakers allows learners to participate in a real cultural exchange inside the classroom, where both teachers and students, learn and exchange some experiences from their own culture, thus they get the opportunity of enriching their teaching and learning process.

In my case, the cultural exchange in the USA has helped me to be aware of the importance of creating cultural interactions with the target language, to motivate students, to make them feel more interested in learning a foreign language. In Colombia, since it is not possible to have English learner speakers to support the learning process in each one of the schools, it is essential that teachers can bring the culture to the class and, in this way, connect students with native English speakers. This experience makes their learning processes more meaningful and makes them aware of the importance of learning, not only the grammatical aspects of the language but also the cultural ones. It is necessary that EFL students connect with the culturally diverse world and learn cultural aspects of the foreign language face to face or

through the media, so they can use English to communicate effectively in different situations. Deardorff (2006) defined communicative competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 247). As teachers, we expect our students to use the language to communicate in different situations, instead of repeating grammar rules repeatedly. Learning a language demands the use of it while interacting with others, and for that reason it is necessary that teachers pay also more attention to the target culture to create real situations where students can make use of the language with communicative purposes.

The purpose of this project is to create a webpage with different sections where teachers can find a variety of media resources that help them to incorporate the target culture into their classes to enable learners to explore the target culture and enhance it, at the same time, it promotes the encounter between the two different cultures involved. This website assist intercultural teaching and learning processes, thus teachers will have the opportunity to foster intercultural competence through different online resources such as readings, audios, podcasts, videos or different websites for creating cultural perceptions of the target language. The resources in this website will help learners to find attractive tools and resources to improve speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, at the same time, EFL learners will learn about the target culture and will be involved in cultural like experiences.

Technology plays an important role in the development of this project. Many teachers in the EFL classrooms face several challenges in their classrooms, such as large sized classes, lack of motivation of learners and sometimes lack of materials. Incorporating technology in the classroom can also create a more dynamic and interactive atmosphere in the classrooms in which teachers and learners can have access to high quality and attractive material, not only inside but

also outside the classrooms. At the same time, students can continue with their process of learning about the target culture and implementing this new knowledge for communicative purposes. Martin and Nakayama (2010) affirmed that the use of internet and communicative technologies has remarkable implications for intercultural communication, since it increases the information learners know about people and cultures from different contexts of the world and connects us with people we cannot meet face to face. Intercultural competence can be fostered with the implementation of online resources to complement the development of linguistic skills. Technology is part of our daily life and most of the learners are familiar with the exploration and use of this tool. Hence, the implementation of technological interactive resources can also turn any classroom into more student-centered class, since these experiences allow learners to become active participants of their own learning process while learning about the target culture and participating in cultural communicative exchanges with English native speakers.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review scholarship related to the definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence and the relationship between culture and language learning. Then, I provide an overview of what Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) means in the foreign language classroom and its benefits. Finally, I present research and studies based on the different resources and materials used to foster Intercultural Communicative Competence in the foreign language classroom.

Intercultural Communicative Competence

Learning a foreign language is a process that involves not just the knowledge of grammatical aspects of the language but also the knowledge of how to use these structures in specific communicative contexts. According to Choudhury (2013), learners need to know cultural aspects of the other culture such as appropriate ways to address people, how to express gratitude, make requests, or simply agree or disagree with someone. Therefore, more than simply knowing the rules to create complete well-constructed sentences, learners of a foreign language should be able to use it in differing social contexts. In addition to the linguistic competence learners develop during their learning process, they need to develop communicative competence, which involves according to Saville-Troike (2003), the “social and cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have which enable them to use and interpret linguistic forms” (p.18). Hence, Intercultural Communicative Competence implies that knowing a language also requires knowing about the culture of their speakers more than the mere linguistic aspects of it.

In the academic field, there are many works devoted to the study of intercultural competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence. Sinicrope et al. (2007) stated that the term intercultural competence is used interchangeably with: intercultural competence, Intercultural Communicative Competence, intercultural sensitivity, and cross-cultural adaptation, but some of these terms also imply subtle differences. Nevertheless, Byram (1997) provided differentiation between intercultural competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence, indicating that intercultural competence refers to the ability individuals have to interact with other people from different countries or cultures while using their own language. During this interaction, individuals are able to overcome any cultural differences. On the other hand, Intercultural Communicative Competence refers to the ability individuals have to interact with people from another country and culture, while using a foreign language. Thanks to the knowledge of the other culture, individuals are able to interact and implement their knowledge of the foreign language to use it appropriately in the communicative process. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) noted that intercultural competence refers to how appropriate and effective people can manage their interaction with others since it implies different orientations to the world from an affective, cognitive and behavioral perspective. Byram and Morgan (1994) defined Intercultural Communicative Competence as the ability of learners to become conscious of their differences with some others, reflect on their own culture and understand the limitations of communication. Issa et al. (2015) noted that intercultural communication takes place when people with different cultural backgrounds can interact and communicate across the different cultural boundaries between cultures.

Based on this, we can see how the encounters of individuals from different cultures require people to be able to effectively communicate and understand the differences and

similarities between cultures while using the foreign language. Tuzcu (2015) stated that teaching ICC implies teaching the general language skills but also emphasizing in communicative skills which at the same time allow students to think beyond their culture to overcome any cultural differences with the other culture. Hence, the teaching and learning process of the foreign language needs to emphasize in cultural aspects of the target language to allow learners to take part of the intercultural communicative process, as Xue (2014) asserted, “foreign language can hardly be acquired or learned without addressing the culture of the community in which it is spoken”.

Culture and Language Learning

Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence in the foreign classroom also reveals the necessity of studying the culture. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) refers to culture as the attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals, customs and behavioral patterns people have since they are born and that is constantly created by people actions. Similarly, Spencer-Oatey (2008) stated that “Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behavior and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behavior.” (p. 3). Since language and culture are inseparable, by bringing them together to the language learning process, learners can have the possibility of learning about the target culture as they learn to use and interact in the new language. Language and culture are fused together, throughout time different authors have highlighted the inseparable relation between them. Brown (2007) stated that language is part of the culture and culture is part of the language, if they are separated, they lose their significance since they complement each other. Similarly, Sun (2013) noted that the relation between language and culture is dynamic and

language is a fundamental part of culture since it is through it that culture can transmit its beliefs, values and norms. Mohammed (2020) in his study about the impact of culture in the English foreign language concluded “mastering a language requires learners' mastery of the cultural contexts in which important social acts occur because it conveys warm feelings and solidarity among speakers and is categorized in the 'social' use of language” (p.26). Furthermore he stated that since language and culture dependent one on the other, they both cannot be taught separately.

During the language learning process, learning about cultural aspects of the target culture allows learners to generate their awareness of the similarities and differences between languages. In this line of thought, Genç and Bada (2005) concluded that a “culture class is significantly beneficial in terms of language skills, raising cultural awareness, changing attitudes towards native and target societies, and contribution to the teaching profession” (p. 81). In this dynamic of language and culture, the study of culture also brings the possibility of knowing about the target culture but also about one’s own culture. Hall (1959) expressed “One of the most effective ways to learn about oneself is by taking seriously the cultures of others. It forces you to pay attention to those details of life which differentiate them from you” (p. 54).

ICC in the Foreign Language Classroom

For many years, the English language classroom has experienced an evolution that corresponds to the necessities of learners and social changes. Different researchers have demonstrated that Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has become an essential issue in the foreign language classroom, for that reason some of them consider that bringing the culture into language study allows learners to develop the necessary skills to communicate successfully with people from the target language. Researchers such as Tran and Pham (2017)

expressed that there is a growing necessity of integrating cultures into the English language teaching in order to increase ICC of ESL/EFL learners, since the 21st century demands effective communication among people from diverse backgrounds. According to Li (2013), in foreign language teaching teachers should not only teach students the linguistic aspects of language, but also the cultural ones, which can allow learners to develop intercultural competence.

Furthermore, Coperías (2007) stated that when developing ICC, what is important is the attitudes, skills and critical awareness that learners can develop during their learning process in the foreign language. Additionally, Byram (1997) argued that the efficacy of communication depends not only in the efficient exchange of information; but also in the willingness to establish and maintain relationships with others. Furthermore, this must be accomplished while integrating aspects such as politeness, which is more crucial than just having an efficient use of the target language.

Learning a foreign language involves the encounter of two cultures where, according to Piasecka (2011), learners bring their own experiences, proper of their own cultures. Only after the exposure to the foreign language, are they able to cultivate a new linguistic and cultural sensitivity towards the other culture. Having ample knowledge of the foreign culture is the main purpose to foster ICC in the classroom, but according to Lessard-Clouston (1997), this aspect of cultural competence is not sufficient since learners also need to master skills in how to properly communicate and behave in the target culture. Additionally, learners need to understand the changing nature of not only the target culture, but also that of their own. On the other hand, based on Byram's (1997) model of factors in ICC, the author highlighted the necessary skills intercultural speakers must develop, by emphasizing the attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to interact, interpret and discover the target and native culture. The author described the factors

as “savoirs”, which consist of the knowledge of social groups and in the knowledge about the home and interlocutor’s country. According to Byram (1997) *Savoir- comprendre*, is the ability to interpret the other culture through different documents or events. *Savoir-apprendre/faire* refers to the ability to perceive the new knowledge throughout real time interaction. Finally, *Savoir s’engager* is described as the ability to evaluate the own and other culture, from a critical perspective. Based on these savors, we can conclude how important is to develop learners cultural awareness and their capacity to critically perceive with an open mind not only the own culture but also the target culture, since the ICC demands interpreting and discovering skills to interact with the other culture.

Taking into account the different aspects entailed in the ICC in the foreign classroom; it is necessary to state that teaching from an intercultural perspective is, according to Kiet Ho (2009), the possibility to develop learners’ own critical cultural awareness, behaviors, skills and attitudes to understand, and have effective interactions with people from other cultures. In other words, learners have successfully achieved their intercultural and linguistic competences. Additionally, as Beltrán-Palanques (2014) states intercultural competence goes beyond teaching basic aspects of the target language, since it implies learner’s introspection to know both their own and the target language and culture.

Benefits of Integrating ICC in the English Foreign Language Classroom

Several studies have identified the important benefits of incorporating ICC into language learning, since it brings positive reinforcement to the learning of the target language. Tran and Pham (2017), in their study about ICC in English language teaching and learning, concluded that by incorporating intercultural knowledge learners obtain proficiency in ICC, which helps them to have appropriate intercultural communication. As Cortazzi and Jin (1999) concluded, focusing

on intercultural competence promotes both learners' development of identity and the other individuals' identities.

Additionally, demotivation is a factor that can affect the foreign language learning process in the classroom; nevertheless, Badrkoohi (2018) argued that knowing about other cultures is a source of motivation for EFL learners and a lack of ICC in their language learning process can mean a lack of motivation during this process. Kiet Ho (2009), in his research about culture in the EFL classrooms revealed that incorporating cultural components in classes not only engages learners from cognitive behavioral and affective perspectives, but also help teachers support their professional development. In this study, Kiet Ho (2009) also demonstrated that teachers were able to move from traditional to intercultural practices and be conscious of the dynamic relationship between language and culture. Moeller and Nugent (2014) also exposed that by integrating intercultural competence in the classroom, learners gain understanding in how appropriately use the language to build relationships and understand individuals in the target culture. Incorporating ICC in the classroom is a process that involves both teachers and learners. During this process, learners are involved in reflective processes to exam their own culture and the other culture. According to Cushner and Mahon (2009), "it is through impactful experiences, where people are challenged to make sense of their new environment and accommodate to the difference, where they ultimately gain more sophisticated knowledge about other people and a feeling of being at home in a new context" (p. 316).

Fostering ICC in the English Foreign Language Classroom

There are different possibilities for developing ICC in the classroom. Since according to Xue (2014) "the cultivation of ICC competence is based on the inseparable relationship among language, culture and communication" (p. 1492), the purpose is to incorporate culture in the

foreign classroom and, at the same time, to prepare learners to communicate with ample vision of the target culture and a critical perspective of both their and own culture. According to Byram and Morgan (1994), the problem is that some texts on language learning and teaching conceive the process only from the linguistic perspective of the language, focusing more on fluency, accuracy, lexis etc. so that the learning of cultural aspects turns into just another linguistic goal to achieve.

Studies related to foreign language teaching and learning have identified a variety of methods, techniques and activities to foster ICC in the classroom. Reid (2015) asserted, “regular conversational topics should be about daily tasks, which should highlight identity, similarity and differences in comparable patterns of culture” (p. 940). Similarly, Chaouche (2016) concluded that in the ICC “teaching methodology comprises fundamental learning processes as the learners’ exploration of their own culture and the target culture and the discovery of the relationship between language and culture” (p. 41). Additionally, Tran and Pham (2017) asserted that English learners should practice both language and intercultural skills equally.

Due to the fact, individuals from different cultures communicate across the globe, and more people are integrating into different communities and the use of internet and technology has become an essential element in our contemporary society. Some research findings indicated that the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence could be fostered through the implementation of technology in the foreign language classroom, at the same time generating a different dynamic in the teaching of the foreign language. According to Galante (2015), “digital literacies, more specifically video projects, have been a helpful way to cross geographical barriers, allowing contact with different cultures and exploration of people’s cultural identities easily accessible”. Additionally, Pema (2014) in her study concluded that by incorporating

virtual environments to develop listening skills students could also broaden their cultural horizons. The author also demonstrated that incorporating material with diverse perspectives and values, referring to the culture and civilization of the English-speaking countries, was essential to promote students' intercultural competence.

Technology can be used to facilitate intercultural encounters between native and non-native speakers of English. Uzun (2013) stated that platforms where individuals from different backgrounds can meet and interact have become essential tools for promoting synchronous intercultural competence. Similarly, Lin and Wang (2018) concluded that the implementation of open educational resource (OER) videos might change EFL learners' negative attitudes toward the learning of a foreign language, while at the time that improving learners' English skills and teaching about another culture.

In addition to the implementation of technological resources such as videos or different webpages to promote ICC. The use of literacy has become an essential resource to integrate into the EFL classroom to achieve ICC. Bhandari and Bhusal (2020) revealed in their research about ICC in the English classroom that by integrating literary texts such as stories, poems, novels and dramas (based on cultural topics), alongside the reflective understanding of the texts, students can develop both communicative and intercultural communicative competences. In this study, Bhandari and Bhusal (2020) also stated that mixing language and literature is an effective way to integrate communicative, reading and writing practices in the classroom, but especially for the construction of cultural knowledge. Another study conducted by Gómez (2012) concluded that including literature in the EFL classrooms is an essential means of promoting ICC, demonstrating that literature allows learners to develop problem-solving skills, manipulate information, and express their own points of view and ideas. In the same study, Gómez (2012)

also expressed that from a pedagogical vision, multicultural literacy pieces are important elements to expand learners' knowledge of the world and to allow them to communicate culturally, at the same time it can help reduce proliferation of prejudices and stereotypes.

Technology and globalization also bring a different dynamic to the EFL classroom, through the implementation of cross-cultural collaborative activities, which promote the development of Intercultural Communicative Competence. Chen and Yang (2014) developed a research project focused on a 7th grade class in Taiwan, to improve EFL students' language learning skills and Intercultural Communicative Competence using collaborative intercultural projects alongside online resources such as skype, online forums, web-blogs and emails. This study also revealed that learners improved their understanding of their own and the target culture, developed collaborative and technological skills and learned new vocabulary at the same time they had the opportunity to cultivate their ICC. In the same way other initiatives to incorporate ICC in the EFL classroom also use virtual encounters with native speakers, allowing the development of different synchronous activities. Some of the resources can include social media, and other platforms, specifically designed for virtual and collaborative work among teachers. Cushner (2015) developed a research study with 105 higher education students, applying a triple-intercultural mediated classroom collaboration with students from the United States, Romania and Fiji. After this research, Cushner (2015) concluded that technology is not only an essential mechanism for engaging students with different cultures around the world without traveling abroad but also that it allows students demonstrate improvements related to their ICC. This research also demonstrated how technology is a cross-border resource to facilitate cultural encounters inside the classroom. As Liaw (2006) stated, "networked communication can be used to develop foreign language students' understanding of foreign

cultural attitudes, concepts, beliefs, and ways of interacting and looking at the world” (p. 51).

The review of the studies demonstrates that the use of technology is a beneficial tool to help learners foster Intercultural Communicative Competence.

Chapter Three: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale behind creating a website to assist teachers with a variety of media resources. These aids can help them to incorporate the target culture into their EFL classes. The purpose of this webpage is to present a variety of online resources, such as readings, audio recordings, videos, and tools that teachers can implement to promote virtual encounters. These resources can be incorporated during the classes since they enables learners to explore the target culture to foster Intercultural Communicative Competence. Hence, the website is composed by sets of resources to help both teachers and learners in their corresponding teaching and learning process.

Incorporating cultural aspects of the target language in the EFL classroom is a crucial issue to allow learners to improve not only their linguistic competence but also to get to know the cultural aspects of the language. By integrating culture to the language learning process, teachers help learners to foster the intercultural communicative competence to successfully communicate and interact with other speakers of the foreign language (Li, 2013; Piasecka, 2011; Tran & Pham, 2017). Implementing culture in the foreign language classroom is essential to give learners the possibility to communicate with speakers of the target culture. However, it is also necessary to get them trained with activities that will strengthen their skills, attitudes and critical awareness, which allows them to maintain relationships, behave and interact during their encounters with speakers of the foreign language (Byram, 1997; Coperías 2007; Lessard-Clouston, 1997). In such respect, Fantini (2006) defined intercultural communicative

competence as “the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 12).

Taking into account the current changes in the globalized world, learners need to learn how to deal with differences between distinct cultures, as well as to recognize diversity and reflect about the target and own culture during the intercultural encounters.

Integrating culture in the classroom can be challenging for some teachers, since for many years, traditional teaching strategies have emphasized developing linguistic aspects of the culture instead of the cultural aspects themselves. According to Byram et al. (2002), the activities proposed by teachers should emphasize true-life information with topics such as life-styles, which inspire learners to discuss and come up with conclusions while they contrast and analyze the target culture with their own culture. Moeller and Nugent (2014) stated that topics such as identity transformation and allowing learners to inquire about processes could help teachers build different tasks that allow learners to cultivate intercultural competence.

The final product of this project is a website with different sections, where teachers will find various resources that can be integrated to the EFL classes. The materials will have different formats such as readings, audio recordings, podcasts, videos, newspapers and some platforms for virtual encounters and collaborative work. The idea is to invite teachers to explore a variety of resources in just one page, so that, they can find material to incorporate cultural aspects of the target language at the time that they help learners to improve their reading, speaking, listening and writing skills.

Teachers and students are more and more getting immersed in a digital and global lifestyle where the use of websites and digital resources is becoming a new possibility to generate different educational spaces in which both teachers and learners can have rapid and

accurate access to the information, and participate in global encounters with another culture. According to Erenchinova and Proudchenko (2017), the use of computers and/or any other electronic devices in the teaching environment may produce a different environment in the classroom, generating an individual, interactive, differentiated and more active learning process.

Hence, the presentation of all of the resources compiled in a website, that seeks to go beyond the traditional use of physical textbooks. As it is well known, the current context of globalization demands teachers to give a different atmosphere in the classes and to motivate students during their learning process. Additionally, it is quite clear that one of the advantages of using online resources is that it can give rapid and interactive access to online and digital material that teachers and learners can use inside and outside the classroom.

In addition to the resources to integrate ICC in the EFL classes, teachers will find a section with some strategies they can implement while using the different materials. The idea is that teachers get some ideas of the wide possibilities of implementing the materials with the purpose of integrating culture to the traditional classes.

Chapter Four: Website Project

This project focuses on the design of a website as a proposal to support teachers and students during their process of incorporating culture into the EFL classroom to foster Intercultural Communicative Competence. This website contains different online resources with material that can be used during the English learning process. The material will support the reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. Additionally to the different material, teachers will find some theoretical material, tips and conclusions about different studies that support the integration of culture into the classrooms. This integration enables learners to explore the target culture and achieve ICC.

The website is called Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the EFL classroom and its address is <https://ivonnechala.wixsite.com/icc-efl>. The home page hosts a definition of Intercultural Communicative Competence and six tabs located on the top of the page that allow teachers to explore the different sections of the webpage. Each one of the sections is designed with the purpose of providing teachers with the opportunity to learn and teach about the importance of ICC in the EFL classroom, its benefits and some suggested activities and strategies they can integrate to their daily practices. All the material presented in this webpage highlights different cultural aspects of American culture and it needs to be adapted for each one of the teachers, according to the characteristics and necessities of their learners.



Figure 4.1 Home Page

In the first tab called “ICC” (Figure 4.2), teachers find the definition of culture, some theoretical aspects about ICC in the EFL classroom, and its relevance in the teaching of languages. The purpose of this section is to guide teachers to the review of some theoretical considerations behind the incorporation of ICC in their classrooms. This section provides them with the concept of culture and the implication of incorporating ICC in the classroom and more specifically in the learning process of the students.

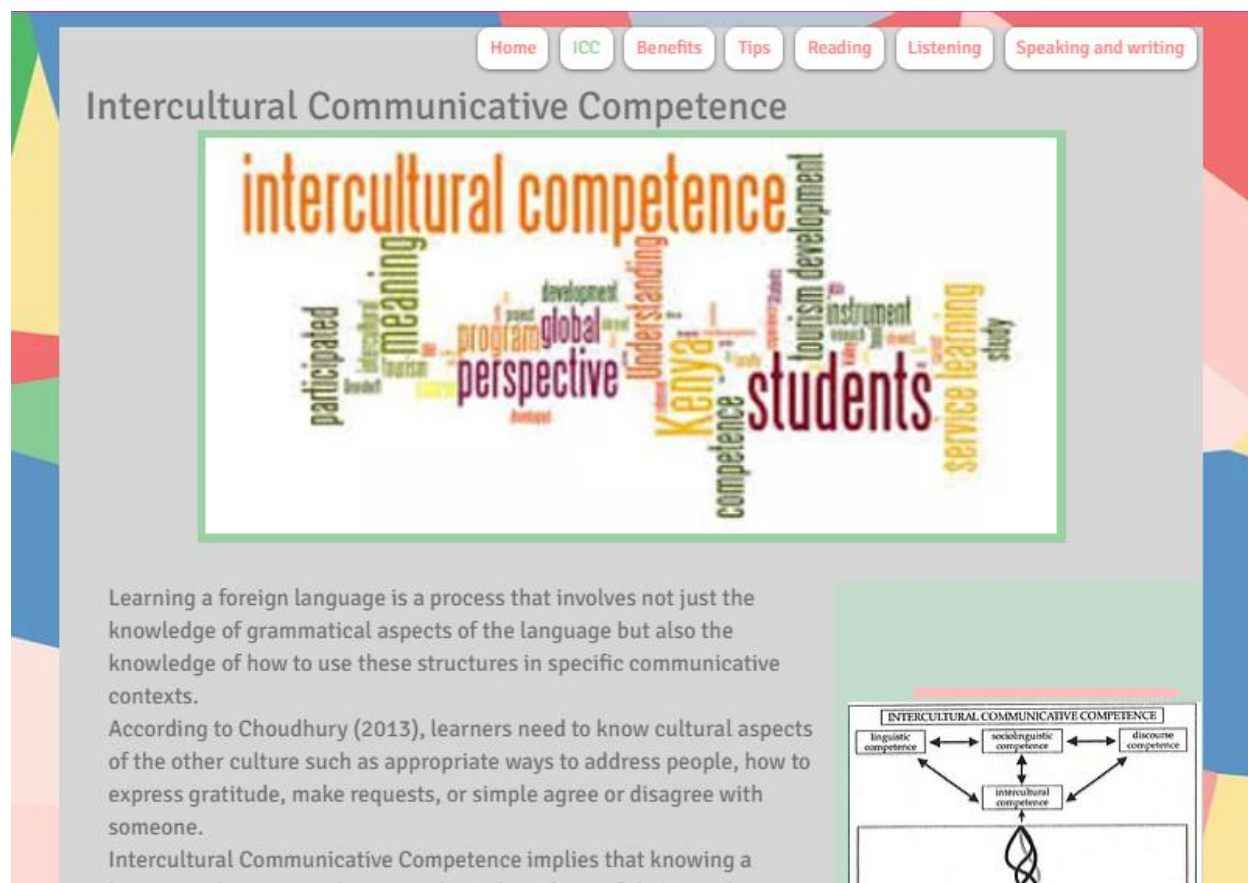


Figure 4.2 ICC

In the second tab called “Benefits” (Figure 4.3), teachers have the opportunity to read about some benefits of incorporating ICC in the foreign language classroom. The purpose of this section is to motivate teachers to incorporate ICC to their traditional classes, taking into account all the benefits it brings to their classes, not only as a motivation for their students but also as the possibility to learn both linguistic and cultural aspects of the target language.



Figure 4.3 Benefits

In the third tab called “Tips” (Figure 4.4), teachers find some suggested aids, such as some techniques, they could use to integrate, the material presented in this webpage, into their classes. Additionally, there are three videos; the first one mentions some activities that can help teachers, including some new ideas on the diverse possibilities of incorporating culture into the EFL classroom. The second video presents a speech in which the host compares communicative competence to ICC and reflects on the importance of incorporating ICC into the classes. In the third video, Professor Deardorff gives some ways to assist learners in fostering intercultural competence.

How to incorporate ICC in the EFL classroom



Reid (2015)

Comparison method

The comparison method is a very common and one of the most used techniques for teaching cultures. This technique is based on discussing the differences between the native and target cultures.

Cultural assimilation

With the use of the cultural assimilation technique, the learners are presented with a critical incident, that can generate some misunderstandings while interacting with the target culture. Teachers give learners several

Cultural capsule

The idea with this technique is to demonstrate, for example a custom, which is different in two cultures. It can be accompanied by visual aids to show differences and a set of questions for class discussion. The idea is that learners can contrast the new



How to incorporate culture into the EFL classroom

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Lynn Goldstein - Moving from Communicative Competence to...

ICC 2014: Lynn Goldstein (The Monterey Institute of International Studies), "Moving...



What are some ways to assist students to develop intercultural competence?

Professor Deardorff has worked in the area of international education for over twenty...

Figure 4.4 Tips

In the fourth video called “Reading” (Figure 4.5), teachers find a selection of reading materials they can incorporate into their classes to reinforce this skill but mainly to study different cultural aspects of the target culture. Teachers also find some researcher’s findings about the importance of integrating literacy texts into the EFL classroom.

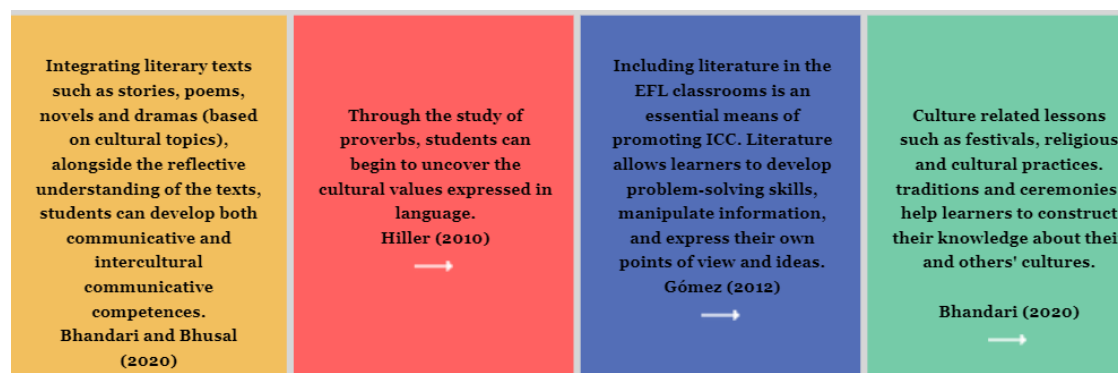
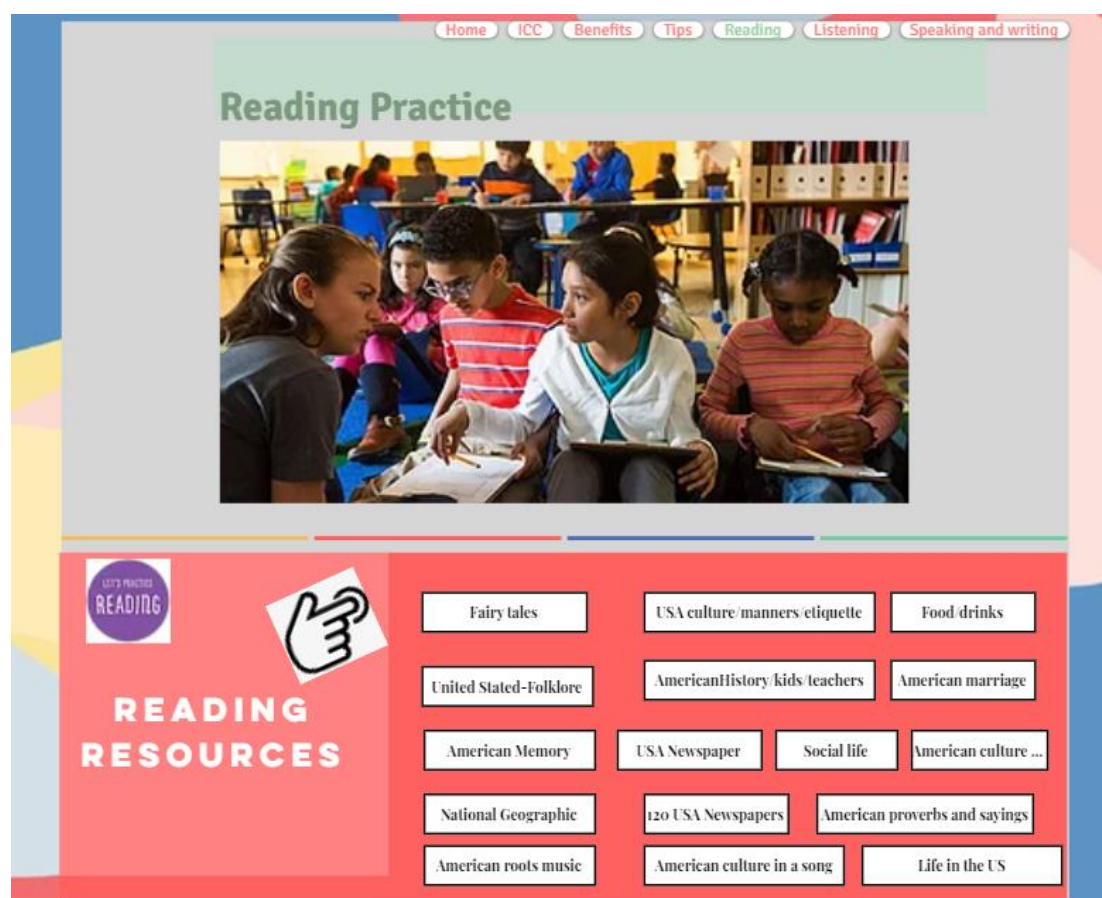


Figure 4.5 Reading

The readings are varied; ranging from fairytale (Figure 4.6), US folklore (Figure 4.7), manners, food, drinks, history, American marriage (Figure 4.8), social life, proverbs (Figure 4.9), and music in American culture (Figure 4.10). Users will also find most of the newspapers around the US, organized by state. (Figure 4.11). Once the teachers click on the different charts, they will be redirected to the original home page to access this material. In addition, teachers will find a link to get access to some lesson plans related to the topic of culture, these lessons could give teachers some ideas on how to develop cultural topics during their classes.

North American Fairy Tales, Folk Tales and Fables

Read North American folk tales from the U.S and Canada by Carl Sandburg, Charles Skinner, Zitkala-Ša and others. [View full list of North American folk tales.](#)

About: North American folklore includes a variety of stories, regions and authors; it can apply to any folk tale or fairy tale from the U.S or Canada, and each collection of stories for children has its own unique characteristics and content. Many of the stories were collected by their authors after they either grew up in the culture, studied it, or lived among the people who told them the tales.



Figure 4.6 Fairy Tales

United States Folklore

Choose one of the 50 states listed below to read folktales, myths and legends from that state.

[Alabama](#)
[Alaska](#)
[Arizona](#)
[Arkansas](#)
[California](#)
[Colorado](#)
[Connecticut](#)
[Delaware](#)
[Florida](#)
[Georgia](#)
[Hawaii](#)
[Idaho](#)
[Illinois](#)

[Indiana](#)
[Iowa](#)
[Kansas](#)
[Kentucky](#)
[Louisiana](#)
[Maine](#)
[Maryland](#)
[Massachusetts](#)
[Michigan](#)
[Minnesota](#)
[Mississippi](#)
[Missouri](#)
[Montana](#)

[Nebraska](#)
[Nevada](#)
[New Hampshire](#)
[New Jersey](#)
[New Mexico](#)
[New York](#)
[North Carolina](#)
[North Dakota](#)
[Ohio](#)
[Oklahoma](#)
[Oregon](#)
[Pennsylvania](#)
[Rhode Island](#)

[South Carolina](#)
[South Dakota](#)
[Tennessee](#)
[Texas](#)
[Utah](#)
[Vermont](#)
[Virginia](#)
[Washington D.C.](#)
[Washington](#)
[West Virginia](#)
[Wisconsin](#)
[Wyoming](#)

Ghost Stories



Never Mind Them Watermelons

An Alabama Ghost Story

retold by

S. E. Schlosser

[Listen to the story](#) (4.3 mb download)

Well now, old Sam Gibb, he didn't believe in ghosts. Not one bit. Everyone in town knew the old log cabin back in the woods was haunted, but Sam Gibb just laughed whenever folks talked about it. Finally, the blacksmith dared Sam Gibb to spend the night in the haunted log cabin. If he stayed there until dawn, the blacksmith would buy him a whole cartload of watermelons. Sam was delighted. Watermelon was Sam's absolute favorite fruit. He accepted the dare at once, packed some matches and his pipe, and went right over to the log cabin to spend the night.

Sam went into the old log cabin, started a fire, lit his pipe, and settled into a rickety old chair with yesterday's newspaper. As he was reading, he heard a creaking sound. Looking up, he saw that a gnarled little creature with glowing red eyes had taken the seat beside him. It had a long, forked tail, two horns on its head, claws at the ends of its hands, and sharp teeth that poked right through its large lips.

"There ain't nobody here tonight except you and me," the creature said to old Sam Gibb. It had a voice like the hiss of flames. Sam's heart nearly stopped with fright. He leapt to his feet.

Figure 4.7 United States Folklore

How American parenting is killing the American marriage



It's hard not to worship them.

FROM OUR SERIES

Ideas

Our home for bold arguments and big thinkers.



By **Danielle Yeller**

Physician and researcher

September 30, 2014 • This article is more than 2 years old.

Sometime between when we were children and when we had children of our own, parenthood became a religion in America. As with many religions, complete unthinking devotion is required from its practitioners. Nothing in life is allowed to be more important than our children, and we must never speak a disloyal word about our

Figure 4.8 American Marriage

More American Proverbs & sayings

Charity begins at home.

From small beginnings come great things.

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

The road to the head lies through the heart.

Necessity is the mother of invention.

I'd rather have them say "There he goes" than "Here he lies."

What goes around comes around.

Don't change horses while crossing a stream.

A crooked cornstalk can have a straight ear.

Barking dogs seldom bite.

Hell and the courtroom are always open.

Haste makes waste.

Figure 4.9 Proverbs

America In A Song: A Cultural Study Through Music

American culture has influenced and shaped the world through centuries. Each day, we witness its diversity and its impact on day-to-day life, worldwide. Music has played an important role in the development and the diffusion of an American identity and molded a typical, and sometimes stereotypical, image of the United States. This article attempts to elaborate a sort of sociological analysis about America, its citizens and their lifestyles through famous songs from American and foreign artists since the early 19th century to present days.

Figure 4.10 Music in the American Culture

US Newspapers by State

[World-Newspapers](#) > **USA**

Alabama | Alaska | Arizona | Arkansas | California | Colorado | Connecticut | Delaware | District of Columbia | Florida | Georgia | Hawaii | Idaho | Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Kansas | Kentucky | Louisiana | Maine | Maryland | Massachusetts | Michigan | Minnesota | Mississippi | Missouri | Montana | Nebraska | Nevada | New Hampshire | New Jersey | New Mexico | New York | North Carolina | North Dakota | Ohio | Oklahoma | Oregon | Pennsylvania | Rhode Island | South Carolina | South Dakota | Tennessee | Texas | Utah | Vermont | Virginia | Washington | West Virginia | Wisconsin | Wyoming |

US Dependencies

American Samoa | Guam | Northern Mariana Islands | Puerto Rico | US Virgin Islands |

Major US Newspapers

- **Arizona Republic**
- **Atlanta Journal-Constitution**
- **Baltimore Sun**
- **Boston Globe**
- **Boston Herald**
- **C-SPAN**
- **Chicago Sun-Times**
- **Chicago Tribune**
- **Christian Science Monitor**
- **Cincinnati Enquirer**
- **Cleveland Plain Dealer**
- **Columbus Dispatch**
- **Dallas Morning News**
- **Denver Post**

Figure 4.11 American Newspapers

In the fifth tab called “Listening” (Figure 4.12), teachers will find some links to access to some videos and podcasts related to cultural aspect of American culture. In this section, teachers will also find discoveries that support the importance of using technological resources and virtual listening environments to learn about the target culture inside the classroom.

[Home](#)
[ICC](#)
[Benefits](#)
[Tips](#)
[Reading](#)
[Listening](#)
[Speaking and writing](#)

Listening



Technology is not only an essential mechanism for engaging students with different cultures around the world without traveling abroad but it also allows students demonstrate improvements related to their ICC.
Cushman (2015)

"News help EFL speakers to learn about controversial beliefs and practices that belonged to deep culture, as well as interpret and evaluate controversial ideologies from other cultures"
Gómez 2018

Implementation of open educational resource (OER) videos might change EFL learners' negative attitudes toward the learning of a foreign language, while at the time that improving learners' English skills and teaching about another culture,
Lin and Wang (2018)

By incorporating virtual environments to develop listening skills students could also broaden their cultural horizons.
Pema (2014)

[Let's Practice](#)



Videos

LISTENING RESOURCES

Music & Podcasts

[ahenews](#)
[BBC](#)
[CBS News](#)
[FOX News](#)

[CNN](#)
[NBC News](#)
[TIME Magazine](#)
[Voice of Ameri...](#)

[NewsWeek](#)
[USA schools](#)
[American Cult...](#)

[Native American c...](#)
[Country music](#)
[National Geograp...](#)

[Popular music...](#)
[American Hist...](#)
[Short American st...](#)

Figure 4.12 Listening

Some of the online resources in the listening section belong to news episodes or live news in the US (figure 4.13), videos about country music, American culture and some podcasts about American history, American short stories and a playlist collection of American popular music (Figure 4.14).

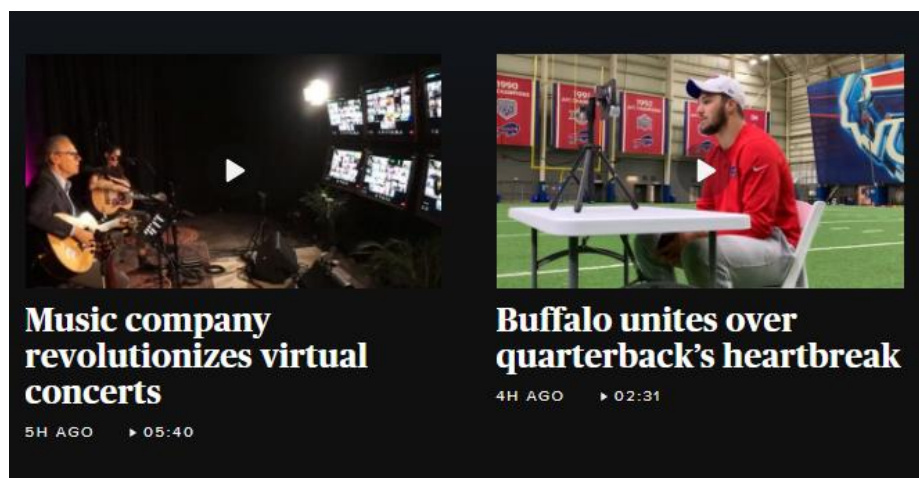


Figure 4.13 News Episodes

Popular Music in American Culture

A collection of curated playlists from around the USA

U.S. Culture / Popular Music in American Culture

Many types of music got their start in the United States – from hip hop and rap to country, blues and rock and roll. Immigrant groups who settled in the United States also influenced many styles of music and made them a part of American music history, like bluegrass, gospel, Cajun and Tejano music. We have curated some regional playlists, which include both classic and current hits!

Read m

- [Philoso](#)
- [Cultura](#)
- [Travel f](#)
- [InterEx](#)
- [Hosting](#)

Southeastern Songs

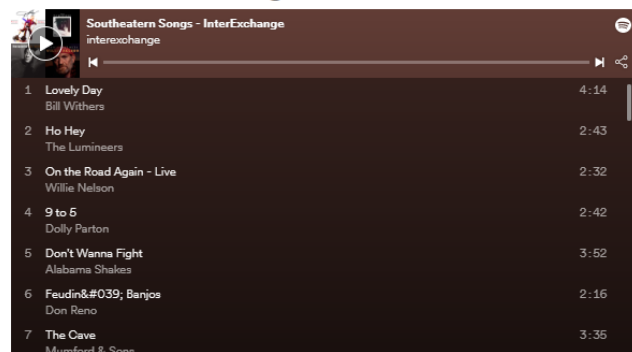


Figure 4.14 American Popular Music

The final tag is called “Speaking and Writing” (Figure 4.15). In this section, teachers are redirected to some of the most visited platforms. In these sites, they will find pen pals (Figure 4.16) to generate virtual encounters with English native speakers, as well as some platforms for some online interaction via chat (Figure 4.17). Teachers will also find some new information that highlight the significance of incorporating learners’ cultural exchange with native speakers and facilitating the collaborative work among teachers and students.

The screenshot shows a website interface for the 'Speaking and Writing' section. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, ICC, Benefits, Tips, Reading, Listening, and Speaking and writing. Below the navigation bar is a large header image of a classroom with students sitting at desks, looking towards a whiteboard. The main content area is divided into four colored boxes, each containing a quote or statement:

- Yellow box:** "During the online experience, students from two different cultures are expected to formulate questions for each other in order to fulfill the objective more open to the other's viewpoint during the perspective exchange process". Moeller and Nugent (2014)
- Red box:** Platforms where individuals from different backgrounds can meet and interact have become essential tools for promoting synchronous intercultural competence. Uzun (2013)
- Blue box:** EFL students can improve language learning skills and Intercultural Communicative Competence using collaborative intercultural projects alongside online resources such as skype, online forums, web-blogs and emails Chen and Yang (2014)
- Green box:** Technology is a cross-border resource to facilitate cultural encounters inside the classroom. Resources such as social media, and other platforms can facilitate virtual and collaborative work among teachers

Below these boxes is a dark blue banner with the text "INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE" and "Connect your students with other classes from around the world". At the bottom, there is a row of five icons representing different platforms: PenPal Schools, Skype, Flipgrid, ePals, and Padlet.

Figure 4.15 Speaking and Writing

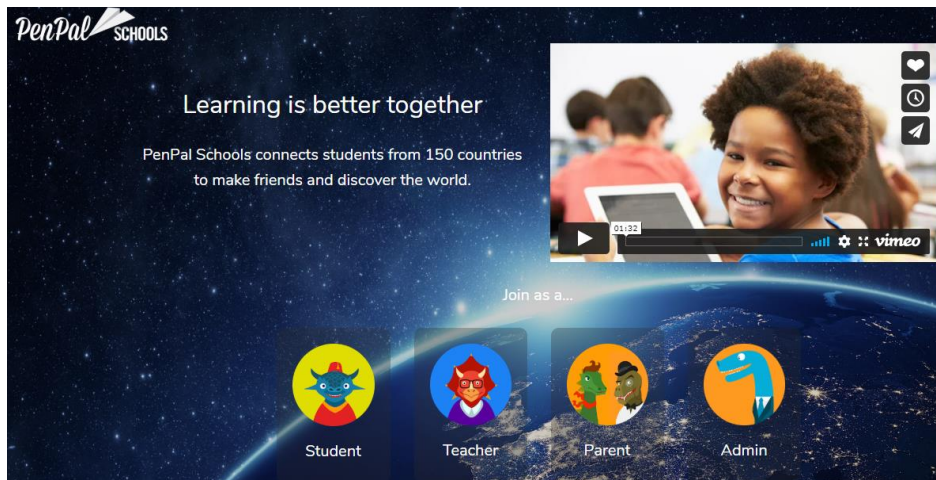


Figure 4.16 Penpals

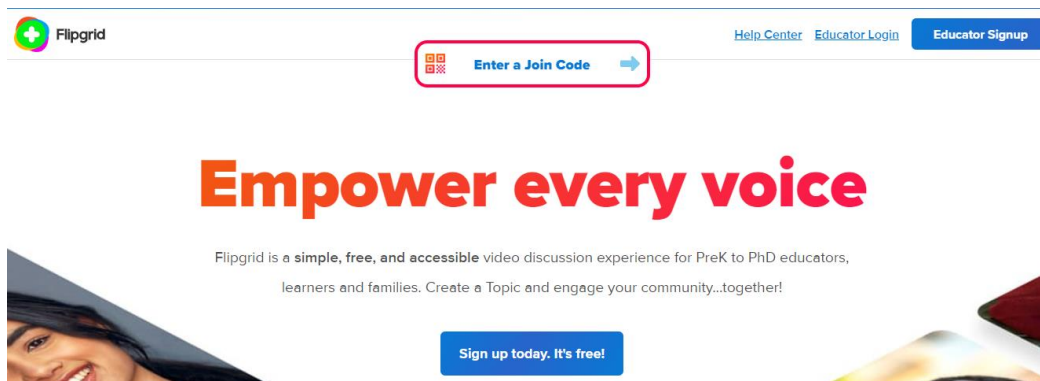


Figure 4.17 Flipgrid

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Teaching a foreign language is a process that demands teachers be constantly looking for new resources, strategies or methodologies to bring learners a meaningful learning process. One important aspect that EFL teachers should take into consideration, during their teaching practices is to recognize the benefits of integrating culture into the EFL classroom. By bringing the target culture into classes, learners have the possibility of being more conscious of the differences and similarities between their native and target culture, learn about their own culture, be more prepared to interact with native speakers and, what is more important, they get more motivated to learn the target language.

Personally, I have witnessed the cases of many students with lack of motivation and feeling overwhelmed during their English learning process. Most of those students have expressed that their English classes seemed to be focused on grammatical aspects of the language only, that sometimes are difficult for them to be understood. On the other hand, I have also perceived that most of students' motivations to learn English is based on the possibility of interacting with native speakers. In addition, it represents the possibility of traveling, an opportunity to know and experience the target culture in real contexts. In this line of ideas, this project is designed with the purpose of becoming a supporting tool for both teachers and learners during the teaching and learning process.

This project is basically an initiative to support EFL classes with a webpage that contains some materials related to the US culture, so learners can acquire some new knowledge about the

target culture inside their classroom, to be prepared for intercultural encounters and foster the Intercultural Communicative Competence. This material is also a useful resource for learners to learn more about their own culture, since teachers should promote activities that allow them to get to know about differences and similarities between their native and target cultures.

Sometimes language learners are not conscious of the importance of knowing about their own culture to have meaningful interaction with people from other cultures.

During my teaching practices in my country, Colombia, I have seen my colleagues struggling to find material or resources to support their classes. Fortunately, technology is now a good ally to get access to online resources and to connect people from different cultures. This webpage is a good resource for teachers who want to boost they classroom and change their traditional classes for more active and motivational ones.

Creating this project has given me the opportunity to reflect about my role as teacher and as a mediator. I have been more conscious of how meaningful it is for learners to study about important aspects of the target culture during their English classes. I am now more aware of the kind and quality of the material we select for our classes and the ways it determines the level of motivation and comprehension of our learners. I also realized how technology must be an effective tool to cultivate virtual encounters with native speakers and work collaboratively with teachers and students from other cultures while we promote Intercultural Communicative Competence inside the EFL classrooms. I have also understood how important is to know and reflect about our own culture to be respectful about cultural differences. Additionally, during the design of this project, I also had the opportunity to put into practice all of the knowledge that I have acquired during the diverse courses I have studied along this academic experience in the master's program; all of them where fundamental to inspire me during the design of this thesis.

I hope this webpage will assist EFL teachers as a support for the design of their lessons, and that they will find these materials helpful to incorporate the culture into their classes. The material this page hosts is authentic material and teachers must do the corresponding adaptation and implementation of different strategies and activities depending on their classes and necessity of their students.

In order to keep this webpage active and updated, I will continue adding more material thus, every time EFL teachers get access, they will find new readings, podcasts, and the last virtual platforms for virtual encounters.

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